

Old Dominion University ODU Digital Commons

OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers

STEM Education & Professional Studies

2009

Primary Factors in Consumer Purchase Decisions of Women's Footwear

Kristen Ducatte
Old Dominion University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ducatte, Kristen, "Primary Factors in Consumer Purchase Decisions of Women's Footwear" (2009). *OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers*. 54.
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/ots_masters_projects/54

This Master's Project is brought to you for free and open access by the STEM Education & Professional Studies at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in OTS Master's Level Projects & Papers by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@odu.edu.

**PRIMARY FACTORS IN CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISIONS OF
WOMEN'S FOOTWEAR**

**A Research Paper Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Department of STEM Education and Professional Studies
Old Dominion University**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Masters of Science in
Occupational and Technical Studies**

**By
Kristen Ducatte
August 2009**

SIGNATURE PAGE

Kristen Ducatte developed this research study under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies, at Old Dominion University. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies.

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Dr. John M. Ritz
Research Advisor and Graduate Program Director
Occupational and Technical Studies
Old Dominion University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
SIGNATURE PAGE	i
LIST OF TABLES	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	v
CHAPTER I	1
INTRODUCTION	
Statement of the Problem	2
Research Goals	2
Background and Significance	2
Limitations	3
Assumptions	3
Procedures	4
Definition of Terms	5
Overview of Chapters	5
CHAPTER II	7
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Consumer Behavior	7
Customer Decision-Making Process	9
Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior	11
Summary	23
CHAPTER III	25
METHODS AND PROCEDURES	
Population	25
Instrument Design	25
Methods of Data Collection	26
Statistical Analysis	26
Summary	27
CHAPTER IV	28
FINDINGS	
Overview of Responses	28
Data Analysis	28
Summary	42

	Page
CHAPTER V	43
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
Summary	43
Conclusions	44
Recommendations	47
REFERENCES	50
APPENDIX	51

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Overview of Responses	28
Table 2. Responses for Dress Footwear Category	32
Table 3. Responses for Casual Footwear Category	35
Table 4. Responses for Athletic Footwear Category	38
Table 5. Responses for Special Occasion Footwear Category	41

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Example of Survey	26

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Any profitable retailer would tell you that their main priority was their customers. The customer determined how well the retailer performed, what products they carried, and how they created their sales strategies. With that in mind, it is important to determine exactly what the factors were that contributed to the customer's final purchase decision. Knowing what the reasoning is behind the purchase decision would allow the retailer to capitalize on those factors and better their business. Following consumer behavior theories and patterns will allow retailers to further increase their understanding of their customer (Best, Coney, & Hawkins, 2004).

Did the customer decide to buy because the shoe was on sale? Was the consumer having a bad week so she indulged in retail therapy? Had a recent injury or surgery rendered her current shoe collection inappropriate? Did she have to purchase that particular style or color to fit a specific outfit or occasion? Is it possible that the sales staff was so convincing that they guided the purchase decision? All of these factors and many more, have contributed to the majority of purchases made by consumers everyday.

Most major retailers would acknowledge that they wish to learn more about their consumers (Best et al., 2004), so this study aimed to provide an inside look into why those consumers buy. Much of the research and data collection were completed with the women's footwear retailers' aspects and benefits in mind. This study was dedicated to determining what the primary factors were in the final purchase decision of consumers of women's footwear.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine the primary factors in consumers' final purchase decisions of women's footwear by category to increase sales.

Research Goals

There were two main research questions used by the researcher to guide the creation of this study.

RQ₁: What are the three primary factors that contribute to the final purchase decision in women's footwear by category?

RQ₂: Which factors are not considered in the final purchase decisions of women's footwear?

Background and Significance

Consumer behavior patterns have long been studied by retailers and marketers alike with the primary purpose of increasing profits (Best et al., 2004). In order to successfully create a new or improve an existing sales strategy, a significant amount of time must be dedicated to researching the consumer, observing behavior patterns, and following buying habits (Manning & Reece, 2001). By knowing which factors of the buying decision contribute to the final purchase, retailers can tailor their sales presentation strategies to meet the needs of each factor.

While information was readily available with reference to consumer behavior, buying patterns, and presentation strategies, specifics regarding the footwear segment were fewer by far. The researcher used evidence accumulated from both footwear specific consumer buying patterns and also from the fashion/apparel industry overall.

This study aims to fill some of the void in respect to the consumer buying habits of women's footwear by determining the factors involved in that final purchase decision.

Recent turbulent economic times have left many retailers facing cutbacks, layoffs, decreased sales, and overall losses. Now, more than ever, retailers share the challenge of finding a way to capitalize on the consumers that are still shopping. The researcher was employed by a nationally recognized women's footwear retailer during the course of this study and decided the report would prove more significant if it was dedicated to that specialty industry/market.

Limitations

There were four main limitations identified by the researcher in this study, and they were:

- The one researcher involved in the study was a graduate student at Old Dominion University and worked for Jones Apparel Group in Norfolk, Virginia.
- The participants of the study were men and women who made a purchase at a Jones Apparel Group store in Hampton Roads, Virginia.
- The majority of the participants were women, aged mid 20's to late 60's.
- The turbulent economic conditions had altered the type of customer who had shopped at a Jones Apparel Group store.

Assumptions

There were several main assumptions that were made in this study. They were as follows:

- The participants of this study considered certain buying decision factors before they made a final purchase decision.

- The participants of this study purchased footwear for personal use.
- There was no upcoming holiday or event that caused atypical purchases.

Procedures

There were several methods used to gather the evidence and research required to complete this study. First and foremost, an extensive review of literature regarding women's footwear, consumer behavior, consumer purchase decisions, and buying habits was conducted to guide the study process. A custom made survey was developed and administered to get direct feedback from the consumers in question themselves. Informal observations and sales analyses were also used during this study.

The survey was created by the researcher to serve as supporting evidence for the study. Two hundred men and women who purchased footwear among four of Jones Retail Corporation stores in the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area over the spring/summer season of 2009 completed the survey administered by the researcher. The questions were compiled to find out what the primary factors were that caused the consumer to make her final purchase decision when she was shopping for women's footwear. Questions were repeated based on the footwear category. Respondents answered questions by following a Likert scale used by the researcher for the study.

The data collected from the above mentioned methods were used to determine the primary factors involved in a consumer's final purchase of women's footwear. Once the factors were identified, the information was used to develop a plan to help increase sale for retailers of women's footwear.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to clarify their meaning and relate their significance to the outcome of the study:

- Consumer – an individual, group of individuals, or organization who purchases a product for personal or end use (Manning & Reece, 2001).
- Consumer behavior – “the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, consume, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society” (Best et al., 2004, p. 7).
- Factors – “any of the circumstances, conditions, etc., that bring about a result...” (Factors, 2000, p. 508).
- Presentation strategies – “well conceived plans that include three prescriptions: establishing objectives for the sales presentation; preparing the presale presentation plan needed to meet these objectives; and renewing one’s commitment to providing outstanding customer service” (Manning & Reece, 2001, p. 487).
- Primary – “first in importance; chief; principal; main” (Primary, 2000, p. 1140).
- Purchase decision – the steps taken by a consumer to choose to purchase a product (Manning & Reece, 2001).

Overview of Chapters

Chapter I was an overview of the study regarding consumer purchase decisions of women’s footwear. The problem was introduced and dissected by its goals, limitations, assumptions, background, and procedures. By understanding why the researcher chose

the topic and discovered its significance, the audience gained an insight into the remainder of the report.

The review of literature was contained in Chapter II. The researcher conducted the study with retailers of women's footwear in mind and geared the purpose and uses of this study towards that market segment. The researcher fully described and detailed the methods and procedures involved in the successful completion of this study in Chapter III. By reviewing the evidence collected by the researcher and following the methods of researching the topic, the reader further understood the process involved in answering the research questions and was prepared for the findings of the study.

Chapter IV identified the results and findings of the researcher with regards to the problem. All of the survey and research findings were gathered together in a way to explain their relationship to the problem statement and questions. As a final summary, Chapter V was comprised of a review of the conclusions derived from the study and recommendations for further research or uses for the study. The audience was now fully able to comprehend the research problem and was aware of its solution.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For the most successful retailers, just knowing *what* a customer bought is not good enough... they need to know *why* the customer bought. The study of consumer behavior is aimed towards understanding the complex and ever changing modern consumer. By comprehending why customers buy and what motivates them, one can truly capitalize on that information and turn it into a guideline for increasing sales and promoting positive customer relationships.

Consumer Behavior

The study of consumer behavior has gained significant recognition recently with the growing number of retailers aiming to perfect their customer relations. Consumer behavior is essentially a study of the individuals, groups, and organizations and the processes they use to buy, pay for, and use products and services that satisfy their needs and wants (Best et al., 2004). This field of study is ongoing and ever changing; consumer behavior is more than just the exchange of money for products (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004). It is important to understand that consumer behavior is not black and white, but complex and multidimensional.

To go beyond the traditional definition of consumer and bring commercial buyers and their behaviors into the mix would be considered customer behavior (Sheth, Mittal, & Newman, 1999). The study of customer behavior involves both their mental and their physical activities (Sheth et al., 1999). The customer plays one, two, or three roles in customer behavior: the buyers, the payer, and/or the user. The buyer is the one who

selects the merchandise, the payer makes the financial negotiations, and the user is the actual consumer of the product or service (Sheth et al., 1999).

Consumer behavior is ultimately a study of consumption, which is the use of a resource, product, or service (Rath, Bay, Petrizzi, & Gill, 2008). A consumption situation is when factors and characteristics non-consumer related influence the purchase decision (Solomon et al., 2004). The act of consuming is generally a meaningful one for the consumer and even if it is not recognized on a daily basis, it is vital to all their mental and physical activities and aspirations (Best et al., 2004).

There are many uses and applications for consumer behavior studies. The first main application is for marketing strategy, which is based on implicit and explicit beliefs regarding consumer behavior (Best et al., 2004). Secondly, consumer behavior studies can be used in formulating regulatory policies. Social marketing activities also rely heavily on consumer behavior research and its applications. Finally, another use for customer research is to inform ourselves and our consumers about the marketing strategies and tactics to be used (Best et al., 2004).

It can be reasonably summarized here that the most common application of consumer behavior research is to satisfy customers and their needs and wants. This idea led to the creation of customer oriented organizations, whose prime focus is to satisfy the customer through understanding their needs and wants, market competition, and consumer behavior as a whole (Sheth et al., 1999). By becoming customer oriented, not only would retailers improve their customer satisfaction, but they would also increase sales, customer loyalty, and industry partnerships.

Customer Decision-Making Process

Determining how customers make their decisions helped marketers and retailers to formulate how to market and sell to their target consumers. It is important to understand these steps and use them to develop meaningful market and sales presentation strategies. There are five main steps generally recognized in the customer decision-making process.

The first step is problem recognition. This is when the customer decides he/she has a problem to be solved and/or a need to be satisfied (Sheth et al., 1999). A gap between what “should be” and what “is” in the problem recognition stage can be either large or small (Rath et al., 2008). Once this problem can be solved or need fulfilled, the customer can return to the state of comfort or normalcy. There are two ways to stimulate problem recognition: internally and externally (Sheth et al., 1999). Internal stimuli would include physical and psychological feelings and needs, like thirst or hunger. External stimuli are market involvements that create the problem recognition, such as an advertisement for teeth whitening products.

The next step in the customer decision-making process is the information search. This is when the problem has been recognized and the consumer is searching for information about how to solve their problem. The amount of perceived risk involved with making the decision is usually considered in this step (Rath et al., 2008). There are three elements of the information search and they are sources of information, search strategies, and the amount of search (Sheth et al., 1999). Sources of information used in the search can be marketer related, that is coming from the market or the product itself, or non-marketer related, when they are independent of market control (Sheth et al., 1999).

There are several different search strategies and each consumer bases their strategy on their personal experiences, prior knowledge, the product or problem considered, and outside sources. The amount of the search is determined by the importance of the decision and the level of involvement for the customer.

Evaluating alternatives is the third step of the customer decision-making process. This step involves the customer making a choice among the alternatives that he or she feels will satisfy the need or solve the problem. Theories suggest that customers do this through considering either compensatory models or non-compensatory models (Sheth et al., 1999). When the consumer considers all of the available choices and compares their weaknesses with their strengths, he/she is following the compensatory model. On the reverse, non-compensatory models, such as the conjunctive or disjunctive models, involve the customer making decisions based on predetermined prerequisites or minimum standards (Sheth et al., 1999). Basic common sense and procedures practiced widely are considered heuristics and may be determinants in the decision (Rath et al., 2008).

The fourth step of the customer decision-making process is the purchase itself. When the problem was recognized, the information was sought, and the alternatives were evaluated, there was always the intent to purchase a product that would solve the problem or fulfill the need. The purchase step itself can be divided into three smaller steps. First, the choice of preference is identified. Next, the intent to purchase is made known. Finally, the purchase is implemented and payment is exchanged (Sheth et al., 1999).

While that may seem like the end of it, there is still one final step remaining in the customer decision-making process: the post-purchase experience. In this step, the customer uses this experience to guide future decision-making processes. It is also a

chance for the retailer or producer to gain customer loyalty, feedback, and customer retention (Sheth et al., 1999).

Recent times and emphasis placed on the fashion industry and its stronghold on the American economy have introduced a newer, updated consumer decision-making process that is more specific to the fashion industry. Step one is the fashion object itself, displayed prominently for the consumer to see. Next is awareness of the object which is step two, when the consumer sees the merchandise and is aware of it. The third step is interest, when the consumer is drawn to and becomes engulfed in the object. Fourth is the evaluation step, when the consumer tries the object on or imagines it in her possession. The fifth step is decision, when the consumer makes the ultimate decision to buy. Finally, step six is when the outcome of the purchase is seen and enjoyed (Solomon et al., 2004).

Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is not a theory that is limited to the consumer only; several factors can influence these behaviors. Wants, needs, and internal and external factors are just a few of the influences that are seen in the consumer behavior field. One must understand the concept of needs and wants and how they relate to motivations and purchase decision factors before the factors can be examined thoroughly. It is, after all, the needs and wants of consumers that marketers have to satisfy in order to be successful (Sheth et al., 1999).

Needs and Wants

The difference between what is and what is desired are needs. Needs can be defined as unsatisfying conditions that will lead one to take action to better the situation

(Sheth et al., 1999). There are two main determinants of needs that marketers should be aware: the individual consumer and the consumer's environments.

There are several ways to typify or classify needs. Utilitarian needs are those needs that consumers experience that are normal, practical, and functional, such as protection. On the reverse, hedonic needs are those that satisfy pleasures and are considered subjective (Solomon et al., 2004). Beyond these, there are biogenic needs, which are quite similar to the physiological needs listed in the first level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Psychogenic needs are most in tune with social aspects of consumer life and deal with acceptance and group dynamics (Solomon et al., 2004).

In contrast, wants are desires to fill a need with more than is necessary to improve the unsatisfactory condition (Solomon et al., 2004). The most apparent difference between wants and needs is that needs solve basic discomforts with minimal standards, and wants are desires for more than is absolutely necessary. The two determinants of wants are individual context factors and environmental context factors (Sheth et al., 1999). The best example of describing the difference between needs and wants is this: Girl A *needs* shoes to wear everyday to keep her feet warm, secure, and free from harm. Girl A *wants* Nine West brand shoes in black patent leather, closed toe pump style. Her need was basic and her want was derived from that need, but it was more than was necessary to satisfy said need.

Now that needs and wants have been distinguished, one can look in detail at the various factors influencing consumer behavior and its trends. The main categories of factors are internal and external. By understanding these factors and their importance, retailers and marketers can tailor their marketing strategies to satisfy their customers.

The external factors are more tangible and easier to define and identify than the internal factors, so the discussion will begin there.

External Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

External factors are elements of consumer behavior motivation that are derived from outside sources (Rath et al., 2008). There are several aspects to consider: cultural, demographic, social, family status, and marketing activities. Since each of these factors is presented by outside persons other than the consumer in question herself, these are considered external factors.

Cultural considerations play a very important role in the purchase decision process for many consumers. Culture is the multidimensional model that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, values systems, laws, customs, habits, traditions, or other human capabilities acquired by members of a society (Best et al., 2004). A culture generally gives one guidelines or boundaries of behaviors and actions that are considered commonplace and accepted, or norms. The culture plays the role of the lens that allows consumers to better see their consumer options and products (Solomon et al., 2004).

These cultural values can be placed in one of three categories: other-oriented, environment-oriented, and self-oriented values (Best et al., 2004). Other-oriented values are those views a culture holds regarding an individual and subgroups inside that culture. Examples include collective views, age roles, extensions and limitations of family, gender and diversity issues, and more. The cultural values that are related to a society's physical, economic, and technical environments are called environment-oriented values. Traditions, cleanliness standards, nature, and performance status are all representative of these environment-oriented values. Finally, the self-oriented values that reflect what

individual members of society find desirable are things like active/passive tendencies, sexual values, religious views, materialistic expectancies, and attitudes towards work/leisure (Best et al., 2004).

Other cultural considerations that are taken with regard to consumer behavior are non-verbal communications, language, global cultures, symbols, and etiquette. Marketers truly interested in satisfying the needs and wants of all their consumers from all cultures should be knowledgeable about each culture's values, norms, myths, and rituals (Sheth et al., 1999). It is important for retailers to recognize that consumers from various geographic cultures will react to buying situations and make their purchase decisions in different ways. Various cultures have differing viewpoints about what is and is not acceptable forms of clothing, behavior, religious and marital statuses, and control many other aspects of their group members' lives (Solomon et al., 2004). The more one understands and relates to these differences, the more adaptable and flexible one can be, thereby better satisfying customers.

The next major external factor that influences consumer behavior is demographics. Demographics are a way to group or classify a specific population by its size, individual attributes, distribution, and structure (Best et al., 2004). Demographics play a key role in consumer behavior because many of the behaviors displayed are directly related to demographic classifications such as age, education, income, and occupation. These demographic variables directly influence consumption patterns and habits because they affect the individual himself/herself, in addition to other attributes (Best et al., 2004). Current demographic trends that are entering the consumer behavior study field are the aging baby boomer population and its new needs, single-person and

blended family households, ethnic diversity and geographic relocations, women in the workplace, and social class disruptions (Sheth et al., 1999).

Generally when most people think of demographics, they think of population size and distribution. Following population trends and patterns can help marketers to better place their products and their stores. Next is occupation, which is proven to be the most widely used cue to define the people we meet in life (Best et al., 2004). Knowing what occupations the market has allows the marketers to tailor their products to the needs and considerations of the workforce and their corresponding preferences. The current education levels of a population also fall into the demographic category and should be considered when constructing marketing strategies. Not only will it take consumer's learning abilities into consideration, but it will also allow marketers a chance to relate value between what they already know and the new products and services that they are integrating into their lives.

The next two demographic considerations are probably the most important and have the most impact on purchase decisions and consumer behavior: income and age. A household's purchasing power is determined by their income level and their accumulated wealth (Best et al., 2004). It is worth noting that income can enable purchasing, but does not cause or explain them (Best et al., 2004). Of the average citizen's income, only a certain amount can be spent for nonessentials, such as clothing or entertainment, and this is called subjective discretionary income, or SDI (Rath et al., 2008). To a marketer, recognizing the varying income levels of their customers is important because they can price their products and services at standards that are attainable for their target customers.

Income level can also be related both directly and indirectly to other demographic variables, such as occupation, education, or social status.

While age may not seem like an important classification for customers, it is essential to consider the needs and wants of various age groups and generation subcultures. Here age is referred to as the time since birth, or chronological age, and not how one feels, or their psychological age (Sheth et al., 1999). Each age group carries with it certain expectations and behavioral norms that may or may not contribute to consumer behavior (Best et al., 2004). All things aside, consumers tend to react and behave like most other consumers regarding age (Solomon et al., 2004). Customers of all ages have varying values that they place on specific aspects of the purchase decision process and marketers must understand these values to reach and satisfy their customers. Generational studies exist to help guide marketers and retailers with dealing with their customers from various generations: pre-depression, depression, baby boomers, and Generations X and Y.

Social class is another important external factor to consider. Placing value on the social status of customers and studying the relationships between those statuses and their behaviors is meaningful for all marketers. One's social standing is basically one's position in relation to the standing of others in society (Solomon et al., 2004). America contains a typical social class system that is a hierarchical division grouping like individuals together based on their income, occupation, educational levels, attitudes, and lifestyles (Best et al., 2004). This class system aids in the classification of different levels of social and economic standing (i.e., middle class or upper-middle class). It has been

proposed by previously reported researchers that social status is a truer predictor of consumer behavior than is income level or occupation (Sheth et al., 1999).

Family and friends are more visible and tangible external factors that influence consumer behaviors. The mere existence of one's family provides numerous considerations to be taken in a purchase decision. Will this be enough food for my family? Is this the proper shoes my child needs for school? Does this umbrella fit my husband's needs? Families also travel through life cycles, where their needs and wants will change as they age and mature and encounter different aspects of their lives (Sheth et al., 1999). These are the types of influences that family may have on one's purchase decision making.

A household is considered as all people living in a housing unit, whereas a family is two or more people joined by marriage, birth, or adoption and all living together (Best et al., 2004). Since the household is the most common and basic consumer of most products and services, it is extremely vital to the market industry to be aware of these households, their varying types, and their consumption patterns. When it comes to household buying patterns, it is safe to say that the three roles of the consumer (buyer, payer, and user) will each be played by a different member of the household and all aspects of their consumption habits should be examined.

Beyond households and families, there are other groups that play important influential roles in the consumer behavior arena. One may call upon a favored reference group, or a group whose values one uses to base their own behaviors, to help make a purchase decision (Best et al., 2004). This could be a group of friends, moms from the daycare, co-workers, or other random shoppers. Primary groups are those who have

direct and frequent contact with the consumer, often resulting in a large influence in the final decision (Best et al., 2004). Secondary groups are those with less personal contact and fewer direct interactions (Sheth et al., 1999).

The final external factor to be discussed, but by far not the last identified, is marketing activities and their influence on consumer behavior. Often when one hears the word “marketing”, advertising is really the first thing that comes to mind. Here, advertising is considered part of the outer influential forces that contribute to or aid in the consumption of products and services and the completion of the customer decision making process. Other outside marketing activities include the convenience and locations of stores and outlets for shopping, the attitudes and service levels of the sales staff, and the knowledge and concern of the retailers and marketers. Newer marketing activities include celebrity product lines and endorsements, internet marketing strategies, product placements in entertainment, and customer loyalty programs.

A subset of the marketing activities factors is the product motives that influence fashion consumers to buy. Key elements such as fit, price, and quality are all determinants of purchase decisions at one time or another for consumers. Depending on each specific purchase situation, varying levels of importance are placed on each of these elements. Determining which of these factors is most important will be decided by which consumers are involved, what products they are purchasing, and for what purpose.

Internal Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior

Now that the external factors influencing consumer behaviors have been examined, it is important to recognize the internal factors that are present. Internal influences, while intangible, play a significant role in the consumer decision-making

process and in most buying scenarios. Concepts such as perception, memory and learning, motives, personality, emotions, and attitudes are all considered internal influencers (Best et al., 2004). Once the external factors previously described interact with the internal factors listed here, lifestyles and habits are formed that are ultimately the prime basis of all consumer behaviors and actions (Solomon et al., 2004).

Perception is the first internal influencer to be discussed. This term refers to how a product or brand is perceived by its target consumer (Solomon et al., 2004). This definition of perception will also include subliminal perceptions, or those that one is only aware of subconsciously (Rath et al., 2008). In order for the information to be processed throughout the decision-making process, the consumer must pass through four stages of review: exposure, attention, interpretation, and memory (Best et al., 2004). The first of these three are concerned with perception and aid in the brand image creation the consumer has.

Exposure in perception refers to the sheer magnitude of chances for the product or brand to be seen or encountered by the consumer. Newspaper advertisements, sport endorsements, internet banner ads, and much more are all considered ways for brands and marketers to increase exposure. The attention aspect refers to the amount of time and resources the consumer places on retaining this information (Best et al., 2004). Interpretation is the meaning that is placed on the sensations associated with the marketing strategies presented by retailers (Rath et al., 2004).

Learning and memory are significant internal influencers on consumer behavior patterns. Determining how consumers learn will help marketers and retailers develop their marketing strategies and plans so the consumer will learn about their product or

service. Learning as it is referred to here can be defined as the conscious and unconscious information processing that changes behaviors and memory (Best et al., 2004). There are varying levels of consumer involvement in learning processes and generally this measure is determined by the size of the purchase in question or the importance of the decision to be made.

Memory is the result of all previous learning experiences (Best et al., 2004). There are two main elements of memory: short term and long term. Short term memory is basically a limited storage of information and sensations (Best et al., 2004). Short term memory is ongoing and active. Long term memory is the “permanent storage” of information and experiences (Best et al., 2004). Marketers know that brand image is significant for their consumers, and achieving this through placing themselves and their products in the consumers’ long term memories is a way to gain permanent brand image.

The next internal factor to be examined is motivation. Motivation is the force that provides purpose for and activates behaviors (Best et al., 2004). Thereby, a motive would be a construct that stimulates the behaviors. Understanding motivations are a way that marketers can comprehend why consumers buy (Solomon et al., 2004). There are two main components of motivation: drive/arousal and goal-object (Sheth et al., 1999). Motivations can be explained quite thoroughly through the model of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow’s Hierarchy is based on four main presumptions:

- All humans have similar motives by way of genetics and social interactions.
- Some motives are simpler or more complex than others.
- More basic motives must be met before complex motives can be met.

- Once more basic motives are met, advanced motives can proceed (Best et al., 2004).

First on Maslow's pyramid of needs are physiological needs, like food, water, and shelter. The next level is safety, such as seeking personal physical safety and security. These needs can be met with services like alarm systems and products like smoke detectors. The need to belong and feel love and friendship is the third level of Maslow's hierarchy and can be satisfied with personal grooming products or pampering items (Rath et al., 2008). Level four is esteem, where one's desire to be superior or to obtain high status can be obtained through luxury items and cars. The top of Maslow's pyramid is self-actualization, or the state of one's true being. This can be achieved by meeting all prior levels of the hierarchy and following one's true loves and passions in life.

Another way to classify motives is by their levels of awareness and acceptance. Manifest motives are those that are freely admitted and aware by the consumer (Best et al., 2004). "Because all my friends wear it" is a great example of a manifest motive. Latent motives are those that are unknown or that the consumer is not freely willing to admit (Best et al., 2004). "These shoes make me feel young" is an example of a latent motive.

Also common for many consumers is to be faced with multiple motives. Often a purchase decision is the accumulation of many purchase motives and each should be addressed individually, if possible, by marketers and retailers. Through communication and direct and indirect appeals marketers aim to match many of these motives for consumers. When it is apparent that there is one or more motives that hold more

significance or importance than the others, marketers should hone in on that value and prioritize it (Best et al., 2004).

Personality also plays a role internally in consumer behavior. One's lifestyle and personal characteristics are often reflected in their purchases. In order for repeat behaviors and responses to be considered personality traits, they have to be consistent (Sheth et al., 2004). It is also common for consumers to make purchases with the intent of boosting or improving their personality (Best et al., 2004). Successful marketers aim to create a brand personality for their products and services; these personalities are often mirror images of the consumers that they aim to target.

Emotions are a large component of the internal factors one faces when making purchase decisions. The definition of emotions that best fit the research is that they are uncontrollable and strong feelings that affect behaviors (Best et al., 2004). Since emotions are generally triggered by external factors, it is easy to think they would fall into that category. But each individual and their emotional reactions and responses vary based on other previously mentioned external factors, such as demographics, so the defining variable would be the other internal values one holds, such as perceptions. Emotions also encompass moods, which are less intense, shorter-lived emotions (Sheth et al., 2004).

It is clear to see how emotions are used in marketing strategies to push the purchase decision along. Using emotional triggers in advertisements are an example of how to use emotions to introduce one's internal influences. Many consumers have created the term "retail therapy" where the idea that one will feel better by shopping and

spending money seems realistic; this is a prime example of emotional influences on purchase decisions.

The final internal influencer discussed is attitudes. Although the term “attitudes” holds many negative connotations, it is used to describe the way one feels about a certain aspect of their environment (Best et al., 2004). Attitudes are a sort of catch-all of previously mentioned external and internal factors such as group influences, culture, demographics, perceptions, and learning. Attitudes can be used to predict consumer behaviors and purchase patterns because they are usually semi-permanent and take time and effort to change (Sheth et al., 2004).

Summary

The study of consumer behavior has blossomed over the past couple of decades and increased significance has been placed on the value of the consumer. In order to understand how consumers spend their money, retailers must comprehend why customers buy and what factors are considered in their purchase decision. The consumer behavior studies have several uses that would benefit the majority of retailers, particularly those in the women’s footwear industry.

The consumer decision making process consists of five major steps: problem recognition, information search, evaluating alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase experience (Sheth et al., 1999). There have also been fashion branded consumer decision making processes developed in recent years to add a closer look to the fashion industry.

The most commonly recognized factors in the consumer decision making process are wants, needs, internal factors, and external factors. And while needs and wants are quite similar and often confused, there are specific differences. There are several internal

and external factors, such as perception or marketing, that influence the consumers' purchase decisions. By using these factors to create a stable sales strategy, retailers can use the purchase decision process to their advantage and help to increase profits.

With so many influencers, it is no wonder that some marketers are lost in determining how to, when to, and where to market their products and services. By thoroughly studying the information available regarding consumer behaviors and their influences, one can gain a truer understanding of the consumer purchase process.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The third chapter of this study explains the methods and procedures used in obtaining information sought by the researcher. The population used in the study is described, as well as the instrument designed to determine primary buying factors for women's footwear. Methods used in the data collection and the statistical analysis for this study are presented.

Population

This study depended on the data collected from the population of two hundred women and men who made a purchase from one of four Jones Apparel Group footwear stores in Hampton Roads, Virginia. The participants were primarily women in their mid 20's to late 60's and had varying income levels and occupations. The participants were chosen on various days of the week at different times of day to gain a wider spectrum of diverse shopping patterns.

Instrument Design

The instrument designed to obtain data for this study was created by the researcher. Closed form questions were used in the instrument to gain a better insight into the consumer. The questions were written to determine what the primary factors are that were involved in the consumers' purchases of women's footwear. Also included in the instrument were Likert scales to measure the ranking of certain answers to the questions created by the researcher. An example of one of the survey categories is as follows:

FOOTWEAR CATEGORY: DRESS	<i>INCLUDES: PUMPS, DRESS SANDALS, DRESS BOOTS</i>
Price is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD D N A SA
Quality is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD D N A SA
Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD D N A SA

Figure 1. Example of Survey

See the Appendix for the complete survey.

Methods of Data Collection

The survey created for this study was the primary method of data collection used. The consumers who made a purchase at one of four Jones Apparel Group stores in Hampton Roads, Virginia, were chosen to participate in the study based on their openness during the sales presentation, their ability to commit time to answer the survey questions, and their reliability as an honest consumer. The researcher obtained the data from a survey designed for this study and was administered both orally and written to a random sample of consumers mentioned above. Surveys were completed either by the customer writing their responses on the survey itself, or through the researcher asking the survey questions orally and conveying the consumer's responses to the paper survey.

Statistical Analysis

Once two hundred surveys were completed, the data were ready to be analyzed. The data were used to determine the primary factors in the purchase decision process for women's footwear. The statistical analysis methods used were measures of central tendency, more specifically, mean and mode. The survey used a Likert scale to measure the responses of participants, so the numerical scores of 5 – 1 were assigned to the

possible Likert answers of strongly agree – strongly disagree in order to achieve a nominal value mean.

Summary

The methods and procedures used in determining the primary buying factors in the women's footwear category were outlined in Chapter III. The population used to obtain the data were described, as well as the instrument that was designed for the study by the researcher. Also included were the methods of data collection and the statistical analysis procedure to be used in tabulating the data. The results of the data and the findings of the study are reported in the next chapter, Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The problem of this study was to determine the primary factors in consumers' final purchase decisions of women's footwear by category to increase sales. The findings from this study are presented in this chapter through an overview of responses, an examination of each survey item and its responses, and a summary.

Overview of Responses

This study was completed using two hundred participants for the survey that shopped a Jones Apparel Group footwear store in Hampton Roads, Virginia. The participants were mostly women in their mid 20's to late 60's and represented a diverse group of income, educational, and occupational levels. Of the two hundred and thirteen surveys distributed, two hundred were returned completed and legible. This was a 93.9% response rate. The data from the response rate for the survey is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Overview of Responses*

Total number of surveys distributed	Total number of surveys completed and returned	Response rate percentage
213	200	93.9%

Data Analysis

The survey was created to answer the two research goals of this study. The first research goal was to determine what factors contribute to the final purchase decision in women's footwear by category. The second research goal was to find which of the factors are the three most primary. The four categories of questioning were sub-divided

by factors and respondents selected their response from a Likert scale devised to measure varying levels of importance among the buying factors.

The factors used in the survey were price, quality, fit, comfort, good customer service, fashion, and the opinions of others. These factors were chosen based on the researcher's knowledge of the sales industry, input from consumers, and observations from the researcher in a Jones Apparel Group footwear store. The survey questions were designed to answer the second research goal of the study to determine which three of these seven are the most primary in each of the four footwear categories described: dress, casual, athletic, and special occasion. The participants were to circle a corresponding response to each of the factor-related statements listed for each category. They selected their response from a five option Likert scale that included the responses strongly disagree, disagree, neutral or not applicable, agree, or strongly agree.

The following findings are categorized by each of the four footwear categories. Each category is then subdivided by the seven buying factors listed and includes corresponding tables of data. The mean for each category was determined by assigning a nominal value of 5 -1 for each of the possible Likert answers, strongly agree – strongly disagree. Those values were then divided by the total number of participants to reach a mean score that was then compared with its Likert measure counterpart.

Dress Footwear Category

The first of the four footwear categories that was surveyed was dress footwear, which included pumps, dress sandals, and dress boots. Of the 213 surveys distributed, 200 participants completed each of the seven selections for the first footwear category.

Each participant selected the response that best suited how they related to the given statement about each factor.

The first factor listed was price and the survey statement was “Price is important to me when I am purchasing women’s dress shoes”. Of the two hundred participants 69, or 34.5% said they strongly agree with this statement. Another 101 (50.5%) responded that they agree that price is important when purchasing dress shoes. Sixteen participants, or 8%, said they were neutral with price because either they do not purchase dress shoes or they do not feel one way or the other regarding price. Of those that did not agree with this statement and felt that price is not important, 12 (6%) said they disagree and another two (1%) said they strongly disagree. The mean was found to be 4.115, which is agree on the Likert scale used. These results were listed in Table 2: *Responses for Dress Footwear Category*, in both the number of responses collected and as a percentage of the responses collected and separated by the corresponding answer from the Likert scale created for the survey.

The second buying factor examined in the dress footwear category is quality. The statement in the survey was “Quality is important to me when I am purchasing women’s dress shoes”. Eighty-five respondents, or 42.5%, strongly agree that quality is important, while 81 (40.5%) agree. Another 26 (13%) are neutral or do not purchase women’s dress shoes. Of the two hundred participants, only eight (4%) say they disagree that quality is important and no one strongly disagreed. The mean was determined to be 4.215, agree. The results were compiled in Table 2, *Responses for Dress Footwear Category*.

The third factor was fit, and its corresponding survey statement was “Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women’s dress shoes”. Of the two hundred survey

participants, 161 (80.5%) said they strongly agree with the statement, while 35 (17.5%) also agree. There were four respondents who claimed to be neutral or not applicable to fit, and no one disagreed or strongly disagreed with the survey statement. The mean was 4.78, strongly agree. Table 2 lists the results found in the study.

The next factor evaluated was comfort, and of the two hundred respondents, all answered. One hundred-two (51%) of participants said that they strongly agree with the statement that comfort is important when buying women's dress shoes. Another 74 (37%) said they agree, while 20 (10%) are neutral and that they neither agree nor disagree that comfort is important, or do not purchase women's dress shoes. Four participants (2%) said they disagree that comfort is important and none said they strongly disagree. The mean was found to be 4.37, agree. The findings from this factor are listed in Table 2, *Responses for Dress Footwear Category*.

The fifth factor examined is good customer service. The survey statement was "Good customer service is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes". Of the two hundred respondents, 14 (7%) said that they strongly agree that good customer service is important. Eighty-five, or 42.5%, said that they agree with the survey statement. Another 91 (45.5%) said that they were neutral and that customer service was neither important nor non-important, or that they do not purchase women's dress shoes. Ten participants (5%) said they disagree with the statement and no one strongly disagreed. The mean was calculated to be 3.515, agree on the Likert scale used. Table 2 displayed the results from this survey statement.

The sixth factor reviewed was fashion in the women's dress footwear category. Thirty-eight participants (19%) strongly agreed with the statement, "Fashion is important

to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes", while another 109 (54.5%) said they agreed. Of the rest of the two hundred participants, 26 (13%) were neutral or do not purchase women's dress shoes, 20 (10%) disagree, and seven (3.5%) strongly disagree. The mean for this factor in this category was 3.755, agree. Table 2 outlines the results from this factor category.

The final buying factor listed for the dress footwear category was the opinions of others. The survey statement for this factor was "Opinions of others are important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes". Twelve respondents (6%) said they strongly agreed with the statement, and 86 (43%) agreed. Another 49 (24.5%) said they were neutral or not applicable. Of the remaining participants, 49 (24.5%) claimed they disagreed, and four (2%) responded that they strongly disagreed. The mean was determined to be 3.26, neutral. The results are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. *Responses for Dress Footwear Category*

FOOTWEAR CATGEORY: DRESS <i>Includes: Pumps, Dress Sandals, Dress Boots</i>						
Factor	Mean	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Price	4.115	69	101	16	12	2
Quality	4.215	85	81	26	8	0
Fit	4.78	161	35	4	0	0
Comfort	4.37	102	74	20	4	0
Good Customer Service	3.515	14	85	91	10	0
Fashion	3.755	38	109	26	20	7
Opinions of Others	3.26	12	86	49	49	4

Casual Footwear Category

The second women's footwear category that was contained in the survey that was created for the study was casual footwear. This category included tailored shoes, flats, casual sandals, and casual boots. Of the 213 surveys distributed, 200 participants completed each of the seven selections for the casual footwear category.

The first buying factor listed was price. The survey statement, "Price is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes," generated 58 (29%) strongly agree responses. Another 122 (61%) said they agreed with the statement. There were seven participants (3.5%) who were neutral or do not purchase women's casual shoes. Of the remaining responses, eight (4%) said they disagreed with the statement, and another five (2.5%) said they strongly disagreed. The mean was found to be 4.1, agree. This data is outlined in Table 3, *Responses for Casual Footwear Category*.

The next factor examined was quality and the survey stated "Quality is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes." Eighty-four respondents (42%) said they strongly agreed with this statement. Ninety-three of those surveyed (46.5%) agreed with the statement, while 19 (9.5%) were neutral or felt it did not apply since they do not purchase women's casual shoes. Another four (2%) said they disagreed and felt quality was not important when they purchased women's casual shoes and no one strongly disagreed. The mean was determined to be 4.285, agree. The following data was found in Table 3, *Responses for Casual Footwear Category*.

Fit is the next factor surveyed with the statement "Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes." Of the two hundred participants, 142 (71%) said they strongly agreed with this statement, while 57 (28.5%) agreed. One participant was

neutral or did not purchase women's casual shoes. There were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the fit factor survey statement. The mean was 4.705, strongly agree on the Likert scale used. These responses are found in the Table 3, *Responses for Casual Footwear Category*.

The fourth factor evaluated was comfort. One hundred-fifty participants (75%) said that they strongly agreed that comfort is important when purchasing women's casual footwear, and another 46 (23%) said they agreed. Four respondents (2%) claimed they were neutral or not applicable to the category, and no one disagreed nor strongly disagreed. The mean was found to be 4.73, strongly agree. Table 3, *Responses for Casual Footwear Category* displays the answers to the statement "Comfort is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual footwear."

The next factor included in the survey was good customer service. The statement, "Good customer service is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual footwear," generated 22 (11%) strongly agree responses and 89 (44.5%) agree responses. Another 77 (38.5%) said they were neutral or do not purchase women's casual footwear. Of the two hundred participants, 12 (6%) said they disagreed with the statement and no one strongly disagreed. The mean was determined to be 3.605, agree. The results from the good customer service factor statement can be found in Table 3, *Responses for Casual Footwear Category*.

The sixth factor was fashion and included the statement "Fashion is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes." Of the two hundred participants, 34 (17%) said they strongly agreed and 104 (52%) said they agreed with the statement. Another 38 (19%) said they were neutral or do not purchase women's casual shoes.

Twenty participants (10%) said they disagreed with this statement and four (2%) said they strongly disagreed. The mean was 3.72, agree on the Likert scale. These results are shown in Table 3, *Responses for Casual Footwear Category*.

The final factor examined was the opinions of others, and it was listed in the survey with the statement “The opinions of others are important to me when I am purchasing women’s casual shoes.” Eight respondents (4%) said they strongly agreed with this statement, while 66 (33%) said they agreed. Another 50 participants (25%) said they were neutral and/or did not purchase women’s casual shoes. Of the remaining responses, 65 (32.5%) claimed they disagreed, while 11 (5.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean was determined to be 2.975, neutral. The data is found in Table 3, *Responses for Casual Footwear Category*.

Table 3. *Responses for Casual Footwear Category*

FOOTWEAR CATEGORY: CASUAL <i>Includes: Tailored Shoes, Flats, Casual Sandals, Casual Boots</i>						
Factor	Mean	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Price	4.1	58	122	7	8	5
Quality	4.285	84	93	19	4	0
Fit	4.705	142	57	1	0	0
Comfort	4.73	150	46	4	0	0
Good Customer Service	3.605	22	89	77	12	0
Fashion	3.72	34	104	38	20	4
Opinions of Others	2.975	8	66	50	65	11

Athletic Footwear Category

The third footwear category included in the study was athletic footwear. This particular category contains all footwear that is used for sports or outdoor activities. Of

the 213 surveys distributed, 200 participants completed all seven sections of the athletic footwear category portion of the survey that was created for the study.

The first buying factor included in the athletic footwear category portion of the survey was price. The statement was “Price is important to me when I am purchasing women’s athletic shoes.” Of the 200 participants, 42 (21%) said that they strongly agreed with this statement and 88 (44%) agreed. Twenty-three respondents (11.5%) said they were neutral or do not purchase women’s athletic footwear. Another 40 participants (20%) claimed to disagree with the statement and seven (3.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean was found to be 3.59, agree. The results from above are listed in Table 4, *Responses for Athletic Footwear Category*.

The next factor examined for this category was quality. The statement included was, “Quality is important to me when I am purchasing women’s athletic shoes.” One hundred and thirty-two participants (66%) claimed they strongly agreed with this statement. Another 55 (27.5%) said they agreed that quality is important. Thirteen (6.5%) of the 200 participants said they were neutral or the item is non-applicable. There were no respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. The mean was determined to be 4.595, strongly agree. The results from this survey item are found in Table 4, *Responses for Athletic Footwear Category*.

The third buying factor listed for the athletic footwear category was fit. The statement that participants were asked to share their opinions about was, “Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women’s athletic shoes.” One hundred and fifty-six participants (78%) said they strongly agreed with this statement and 39 (19.5%) said they agreed. Of the 200 surveys returned, five (2.5) responded neutral or not applicable, while

no one disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean was 4.755, strongly agree. The results were shown in Table 4, *Responses for Athletic Footwear Category*.

Comfort was the next buying factor examined in the survey with the statement, “Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women’s athletic shoes.” Of the two hundred participants, 162 (81%) strongly agreed with this statement. Another 30 (15%) said they agreed, while four (2%) said they were neutral or do not purchase women’s athletic footwear. Four (2%) respondents disagreed with the statement listed above and no one strongly disagreed. The mean was 4.75, strongly agree. The responses were placed together in Table 4, *Responses for Athletic Footwear Category*.

The fifth buying factor reviewed was good customer service. “Good customer service is important to me when I am purchasing women’s athletic shoes” was the statement used to elicit the opinions of the participants. Twenty-six participants (13%) said they strongly agreed with this statement and another 92 (46%) said they agreed. Seventy-one respondents (35.5%) were neutral or do not purchase women’s athletic shoes. Of the two hundred surveys, eleven (5.5%) had disagreed answers and none had strongly disagreed. The mean was found to be 3.665, agree. Their answers can be found in Table 4, *Responses for Athletic Footwear Category*.

The sixth buying factor discussed during the survey was fashion. The survey statement that generated opinions on fashion in the women’s athletic footwear category was “Fashion is important to me when I am purchasing women’s athletic shoes.” Of the two hundred surveys collected, 15 (7.5%) had strongly agree responses and 53 (26.5%) had agree responses. Fifty participants (25%) claimed to be neutral or do not purchase women’s shoes. Another 70 (35%) disagreed with the statement and twelve (6%)

strongly disagreed. The mean was 2.945, neutral. Table 4, *Responses for Athletic Footwear Category* lists the responses given.

The seventh and final buying factor studied in the women's athletic footwear category was opinions of others. Respondents were asked to rate their compliance with the statement "Opinions of others are important to me when I am purchasing women's athletic shoes." There were four respondents (2%) who strongly agreed with this statement and 38 (19%) agreed. Another 58 (29%) were neutral or do not purchase women's athletic shoes. Of the remaining responses, 89 (44.5%) disagreed with the statement while another 11 (5.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean was 2.675, neutral. The responses from this factor were listed in Table 4, *Responses for Athletic Footwear Category*.

Table 4. *Responses for Athletic Footwear Category*

FOOTWEAR CATGEORY: ATHLETIC <i>Includes: Athletic Sneakers, Shoes Purchased for Sport</i>						
Factor	Mean	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Price	3.59	42	88	23	40	7
Quality	4.595	132	55	13	0	0
Fit	4.755	156	39	5	0	0
Comfort	4.75	162	30	4	4	0
Good Customer Service	3.665	26	92	71	11	0
Fashion	2.945	15	53	50	70	12
Opinions of Others	2.675	4	38	58	89	11

Special Occasion Footwear Category

The fourth and final footwear category examined in this study was special occasion footwear. Special occasion footwear encompasses all shoes that are purchased

for a particular occasion or event, such as a wedding or prom. Of the 213 surveys distributed, 200 were completed in the special occasion footwear category.

The first buying factor studied in the survey was price. The participants' responses were generated with the statement, "Price is important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes." Sixty-two respondents (31%) strongly agreed with the statement and another 96 (48%) agreed. Of the two hundred surveys returned, 16 (8%) had neutral or non-applicable answers. Another 21 respondents (10.5%) disagreed with the statement and five (2.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean was found to be 3.945, agree. The results were compiled in Table 5, *Responses for Special Occasion Footwear Category*.

The second factor included in the survey's special occasion footwear category was quality. The participants were asked to rate their opinions regarding the statement "Quality is important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes." Of the two hundred participants, 43 (21.5%) strongly agreed with the above statement and 85 (42.5%) agreed. Twenty-seven (13.5%) of respondents said they were neutral or do not purchase shoes for special occasions or events. Of the remaining responses, 45 (22.5%) disagreed with the statement and no one strongly disagreed. The mean was 3.63, agree. The above responses can be found in Table 5, *Responses for Special Occasion Footwear Category*.

The next factor being discussed in this category was fit, and the survey statement was "Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes. Seventy-three (36.5%) respondents strongly agreed with this statement and another 110 (55%) agreed. There were three participants (1.5%) who were neutral or not applicable

and fourteen (7%) disagreed. None of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. The mean was 4.21, agree. The answers given by the participants are found in Table 5, *Responses for Special Occasion Footwear Category*.

Comfort is the fourth buying factor included in the survey. “Comfort is important to me when I am purchasing women’s special occasion shoes,” was the statement that participants were asked to agree on various levels with. Of the two hundred participants, 49 (24.5%) strongly agreed with the statement and another 64 (32%) agreed. Fifty-three participants (26.5%) were neutral or did not purchase women’s special occasion shoes. Another 23 (11.5%) answered that they disagreed and 11 (5.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean was found to be 3.58, agree. Table 5, *Responses for Special Occasion Footwear Category* outlines the results of the survey.

The next buying factor discussed was good customer service and the survey statement was, “Good customer service is important to me when I am purchasing women’s special occasion shoes.” There were 23 participants (11.5%) who strongly agreed with this statement and another 75 (37.5%) who agreed. Seventy-one respondents (35.5%) were neutral or do not purchase shoes for special occasions. Of the remaining responses, 31 (15.5%) disagreed and no one strongly disagreed. The mean was determined to be 3.45, neutral. Table 5, *Responses for Special Occasion Footwear Category* was compiled of the results from this category in the survey.

Fashion was the sixth buying factor included in the survey portion for women’s special occasion footwear. The statement used to generate participants’ responses was, “Fashion is important to me when I am purchasing women’s special occasion shoes.” Of the two hundred surveys returned, 85 (42.5%) strongly agreed with the statement.

Another 83 (41.5%) agreed. There were 19 respondents (9.5%) who were neutral or do not purchase women's special occasion shoes. Eight people (4%) disagreed and another five (2.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean was determined to be 4.175, agree. The results from the fashion factor were placed into Table 5, *Responses for Special Occasion Footwear Category*.

The final buying factor examined for the women's special occasion footwear category was the opinions of others. "The opinions of others are important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes" was the statement used in the survey. Twenty-eight respondents (14%) said they strongly agreed with the statement and another 79 (39.5%) agreed. Of the two hundred surveys received, 40 (20%) were neutral or do not purchase women's special occasion shoes. There were 50 participants (25%) who disagreed with the statement and three (1.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean was found to be 3.395, neutral. The above listed results are found in the Table 5 below.

Table 5. *Responses for Special Occasion Footwear Category*

FOOTWEAR CATGEORY: SPECIAL OCCASION <i>Includes: Shoes Purchased for a Particular Event or Occasion</i>						
Factor	Mean	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral or Not Applicable	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Price	3.945	62	96	16	21	5
Quality	3.630	43	85	27	45	0
Fit	4.210	73	110	3	14	0
Comfort	3.585	49	64	53	23	11
Good Customer Service	3.450	23	75	71	31	0
Fashion	4.175	85	83	19	8	5
Opinions of Others	3.395	28	79	40	50	3

Summary

This study was completed by using a survey created for the study. The survey was distributed to two hundred and thirteen customers who shopped a Jones Apparel Group footwear store in Hampton Roads, Virginia. Of the two hundred-thirteen surveys distributed, two hundred were returned and used to compile the data in this chapter. The researcher recorded and summarized the data collected from the survey, input it into tables, and described it. Chapter V includes a summary of the study, the conclusions made from the data, and the researcher's recommendations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is a summary of the researcher's study. The data found, analyzed, and interpreted by the researcher were included in the conclusions portion of this chapter. Finally, the study is completed with the researcher's recommendations based on the study and its problem.

Summary

The problem of this study was to determine the primary factors in consumers' final purchase decisions of women's footwear by category to increase sales. There were two main research goals of the study: determine what are the three most primary factors that contribute to the final purchase decision in women's footwear by category and determine which of the factors are considered in the final purchase decision in women's footwear by category.

The study was significant because by knowing what factors consumers consider when making a purchase decision, retailers can use that information to tailor their sales presentations, provide the best inventory at the lowest price, and become highly profitable. It is important for footwear retailers to understand their market and follow research and studies regarding consumer buying habits and consumer behavior in general.

There were four main limitations to this study:

- The researcher was a graduate student at Old Dominion University and worked for a Jones Apparel Group store.
- The participants of the study were men and women who purchased footwear from a Jones Apparel Group store in Hampton Roads, Virginia.

- The majority of respondents were women in their mid 20's to late 60's.
- The current economic state has limited the types of customers who shopped at Jones Apparel Group store.

The participants of the study were two hundred men and women who purchased from a Hampton Roads Jones Apparel Group store. They were primarily women in their mid 20's to late 60's and had varying occupations and educational levels. The participants were chosen at various times and days of the week as to gain a wider insight into the diverse shopping patterns of consumers.

The researcher designed and created the instrument used to gather data for the study. The questions on the survey were developed to determine what are the three most primary buying factors involved in consumers' footwear purchases. A Likert scale was used to measure the opinions of the consumers based on the statements created by the researcher.

The data collected for this study were through a survey created and administered by the researcher. Two hundred-thirteen surveys were distributed and two hundred were returned completed and legible. The researcher obtained the completed surveys both through physically handing the surveys out and by administering them orally to select consumers. Once the surveys were completed, the results were tabulated and placed into tables for easier reference. The statistical analysis methods used were measures of central tendency, including number, percentage, and mean.

Conclusions

The first research goal of this study was to determine what are the three most primary factors that contribute to the final purchase decision in women's footwear by

category. The researcher determined through research, informal observations, and previous industry knowledge and experience that the seven most referenced buying factors in a women's purchase decision were price, quality, fit, comfort, good customer service, fashion, and the opinions of others. The four women's footwear categories included in the study were dress, casual, athletic, and special occasion footwear.

In the dress shoe category, the three most primary buying factors considered in a purchase of women's footwear were fashion, fit, and comfort. These three factors had the majority of the respondents answer that they strongly agreed or agreed that these factors were important in their purchase decision. One hundred-nine of two hundred respondents (54.5%) agreed that fashion was important. One hundred sixty-one participants (80.5%) strongly agreed that fit was important when purchasing women's dress shoes. Of the two hundred surveys returned, one hundred-two (51%) said they strongly agreed that comfort was important when considering dress shoes for purchase.

In the women's casual footwear category, the three most primary buying factors considered by survey participants were comfort, fit, and price. The majority of participants strongly agreed that comfort and fit were important when purchasing women's casual footwear and agreed that price was important also. Of the two hundred surveys included in the study, one hundred-fifty (75%) strongly agreed and stated that comfort was important when considering women's dress shoes for purchase. One hundred forty-two participants (71%) strongly agreed that fit was important when determining which women's casual footwear to purchase. One hundred twenty-two of the participants (61%) said they agreed that price was important when purchasing women's casual footwear.

In the women's athletic footwear category, the three most primary buying factors were found to be comfort, fit, and quality. The majority of those consumers who completed the researcher's survey all strongly agreed that the three above mentioned factors are important to their purchase decisions when it comes to women's athletic footwear. One hundred sixty-two respondents (81%) strongly agreed that comfort was important when purchasing women's athletic footwear. Of the two hundred participants, one hundred fifty-six (78%) strongly agreed that fit was an important consideration for the purchase of women's athletic footwear. Another one hundred thirty-two (66%) of those surveyed strongly agreed that quality is an important factor.

In the women's special occasion footwear category, fit, price, and quality were found to be the three most primary buying factors considered. The majority of the participants agreed that these three factors are important when considering special occasion footwear to purchase. Of the two hundred participants, one hundred ten (55%) said they agreed that fit was important when purchasing women's special occasion footwear. Another ninety-six (48%) said that they agreed that price was important, and eighty-five (42.5%) said they agreed that quality was important.

The second research goal of this study was to determine which of the above mentioned factors are not considered in the final purchase decisions of women's footwear by category. There was only one category that had a majority of the respondents claim that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the buying factors used in the study. In the athletic footwear category, the majority of respondents disagreed that fashion and the opinions of others are important when making a purchase decision. Seventy participants (35%) disagreed that fashion is important when deciding what women's

athletic shoes to purchase. Another eighty-nine (44.5%) disagreed that the opinions of others are important.

Recommendations

The researcher developed several recommendations for women's footwear retailers based on the data found in the study. The study was aimed to answer the research goals and to find a way to increase sales in the women's footwear industry. These recommendations are grouped below by the four women's footwear categories included in this study.

It was found that fashion, fit, and comfort were the three most primary buying factors that are considered when consumers are purchasing women's dress footwear. The first recommendation was to include fashion, fit, and comfort in the sales presentation through questioning and conversation on the part of the salesmen. For example, the sales staff would mention the promotional sales or the comfort rubber soling used while consumers are contemplating a purchase. It is crucial to touch on each of these points during the sales presentation to incorporate the consumers' considerations in the buying process.

The second recommendation for the women's dress shoe category to include a variety of styles that are current and up-to-date with fashionable trends. Since fashion is a major consideration for women's dress shoes, it would be wise for major women's footwear retailers to leave a portion of their open-to-buy budget available for any upcoming trends or fads that may hit the market mid-season. The dress shoe category is the only category that considered fashion to be one of the three most primary buying

factors considered, and therefore should be the category to take the most risks with styling and color choice.

The next women's footwear category examined for the study was casual shoes and the three most primary buying factors were found to be comfort, fit, and price. It can be reasonably assumed that consumers are looking for casual shoes that are comfortable and easy to wear. In Jones Retail Corporation footwear stores, as well as women's footwear retailers in general, the sales staff should use these three factors as selling points during the consumer presentation. Another recommendation would be to invest inventory budget into shoes that have added comfort benefits, such as rubber soling or cushioned insoles. Styles that have a higher profit margin should also be chosen to buy and carry in stores since these are the styles that will allow for larger markdowns and allow consumer's to feel that they received the best sale price possible.

The third footwear category in the study was women's athletic shoes. The three most primary buying factors that consumers claimed to consider during their purchase were comfort, fit, and quality. As with the above categories, these three factors should be addressed in the sales presentation. Since fit was found to be more important to consumers than fashion in the athletic category, it is recommended that footwear retailers decrease the breadth (variety) of fashion styles in athletic shoes and increase the depth of the sizes carried. By stocking the inventory with harder-to-find sizes and varying widths, it would be easier to fit the consumer and this is extremely important for shoes used in sport. It is also recommended that retailers spend more on quality materials and construction processes than on trends and colors to offer the most comfortable and high quality athletic shoes possible.

The fourth and final women's footwear category considered in the study was special occasion shoes and the three primary buying factors for this category were found to be fit, price, and quality. Once the sales staff has conversed with the consumer and the sales presentation is underway it is again recommended that the focus should be on fit, price, and quality. Some of the above recommendations apply here as well, such as using smart pricing and promotional strategies or using quality materials. Since special occasion footwear generally is not worn on an everyday basis, it is important that the materials used in the construction are high quality so they will last a long time and can be used on several different future occasions. It is also crucial to keep prices as low as possible, since it can be reasonably assumed that consumers do not want to pay a lot of money for a shoe that will only be worn sporadically.

Further study of the problem and its variances would be beneficial to the women's footwear industry. The researcher recommends repeating this study in different geographical regions, since the findings would most certainly change with varying climate zones, buying patterns, and socioeconomic factors. The study should also be repeated with several other footwear categories, including men's, children's, and specialty categories. With the current economic status and the recession that has gripped the retail industry, repeating this study in the future, even if just one year from now, will possibly produce different results.

REFERENCES

- Best, R., Coney, K., & Hawkins, D. (2004). *Consumer behavior: Building marketing strategy* (9th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Cohen, M. (2006). *Why customers do what they do: Who they are, why they buy, and how you can anticipate their every move*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Factor. (2000). *Webster's new world college dictionary* (4th ed., p. 508). Foster City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide.
- Manning, G., & Reece, B. (2001). *Selling today: Building quality partnerships* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Primary. (2000). *Webster's new world college dictionary* (4th ed., p. 1140). Foster City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide.
- Rath, P., Bay, S., Petrizzi, R., & Gill, P. (2008). *The why of the buy: Consumer behavior and fashion marketing*. New York: Fairchild Books, Inc.
- Sheth, J., Mittal, B., & Newman, B. (1999). *Customer behavior: Consumer behavior and beyond*. Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western.
- Solomon, M., & Rabolt, N. (2004). *Consumer behavior in fashion*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

APPENDIX

Please read the statements in the left column. Circle the response in the right column that best describes how you feel about the statements from the left column. The answer choices are as follows: SD= strongly disagree; D= disagree; N= neutral or not applicable; A= agree; SA= strongly agree.					
FOOTWEAR CATEGORY: DRESS	<i>INCLUDES: PUMPS, DRESS SANDALS, DRESS BOOTS</i>				
Price is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Quality is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Comfort is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Good customer service is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Fashion is important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The opinions of others, including friends and family, are important to me when I am purchasing women's dress shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
FOOTWEAR CATEGORY: CASUAL	<i>INCLUDES: TAILORED SHOES, FLATS, CASUAL SANDALS, CASUAL BOOTS</i>				
Price is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Quality is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Comfort is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Good customer service is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
Fashion is important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA
The opinions of others, including friends and family, are important to me when I am purchasing women's casual shoes.	SD	D	N	A	SA

FOOTWEAR CATEGORY: ATHLETIC	<i>INCLUDES: ATHLETIC SNEAKERS, SHOES USED FOR SPORT</i>
Price is important to me when I am purchasing women's athletic shoes.	SD D N A SA
Quality is important to me when I am purchasing women's athletic shoes.	SD D N A SA
Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women's athletic shoes.	SD D N A SA
Comfort is important to me when I am purchasing women's athletic shoes.	SD D N A SA
Good customer service is important to me when I am purchasing women's athletic shoes.	SD D N A SA
Fashion is important to me when I am purchasing women's athletic shoes.	SD D N A SA
The opinions of others, including friends and family, are important to me when I am purchasing women's athletic shoes.	SD D N A SA
FOOTWEAR CATEGORY: SPECIAL OCCASION	<i>INCLUDES: SHOES PURCHASED FOR A PARTICULAR EVENT OR OCCASION</i>
Price is important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes.	SD D N A SA
Quality is important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes.	SD D N A SA
Fit is important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes.	SD D N A SA
Comfort is important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes.	SD D N A SA
Good customer service is important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes.	SD D N A SA
Fashion is important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes.	SD D N A SA
The opinions of others, including friends and family, are important to me when I am purchasing women's special occasion shoes.	SD D N A SA

Additional Comments: